



# RESUMES, REFERENCES, & COVER LETTERS

A STARTER GUIDE FOR DEVELOPING  
YOUR JOB SEARCH DOCUMENTS

CAREER  
CENTER



NEBRASKA  
WESLEYAN  
UNIVERSITY

Student Center, Lower Level | 402.465.2224 | [career@nebrwesleyan.edu](mailto:career@nebrwesleyan.edu) | [career.nebrwesleyan.edu](http://career.nebrwesleyan.edu)

# CRAFTING YOUR RESUME

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An essential marketing tool, your resume provides a summary of your education, experiences, achievements, and leadership. A well-written resume should be specific and focused, highlighting experiences relevant to the job, internship, or program for which you are applying. Resumes often serve as the reader's first impression of you as an applicant. This document should generate interest in you, ideally enough interest to result in an offer for an interview.

There is no one "ideal" way to construct your resume in every situation. You have choices when it comes to how you market yourself and present your information. Only you can write your resume, and, in the end, you must be content with the final product. We encourage you to consider these general guidelines, but please tailor them to your needs and create a resume that represents you in the best possible way.

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## Step 1: Brainstorm

Before targeting your resume to your purpose, it is helpful to brainstorm. Start broad by writing down your most significant experiences and accomplishments. It may help to use the following categories to generate ideas and organize your information:

- **Education** (colleges, relevant coursework, certifications, special training)
- **Experience** (paid, volunteer, internships, military)
- **Activities** (student organizations, professional associations, sororities/fraternities)
- **Honors** (scholarships, academic achievements, special awards, and recognition)
- **Measurable skills** (software proficiency, foreign languages, laboratory skills)

Periodically, you will want to revisit and update your employment history/experience section. This information will be invaluable throughout your working years as you change positions and seek any relevant experiences from your past.

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## Step 2: Format It (No Template)

When it comes to resume design, there is no magic format that works best for everyone. Despite differing preferences, it is up to you to come up with a format that best highlights your qualifications in an easy-to-read, organized document.

Because resumes must be customized to you, your needs, and your experiences, it is difficult to take an already created resume template and make it your own. Employers that have online applications often use an Applicant Tracking System (ATS) to filter through resumes to ensure applicants are a good fit for the job. ATS's cannot always read the formatting found on templates, and so you run the risk of the ATS not

pushing you forward in the hiring process if it cannot read your resume. Also, realize that employers typically know when you've used a template, and this may cause them to question your ability to format and create your own documents. For these reasons, resume templates are strongly discouraged.

Employers receive hundreds of applications and spend, on average, 15 seconds initially skimming a resume. To pass this initial scan and get the reader to take a closer look, keep these guidelines in mind:

- Margins should be between 0.5 inches and 1 inch.
- Font size should be between 10-12 point (except for name, which can be larger).
- Make your resume easy to skim with bullets, short declarative phrases.
- Begin bullet points with action verbs.
- When ordering resume sections, prioritize according to the needs of the employer, putting the most important information toward the top.
- Use just one, easy-to-read font style throughout the resume; avoid script fonts. Some studies show that sans serif fonts (like Arial, Calibri, and Tahoma) are more accessible. Times New Roman, while a serif font, is still widely used and accepted by many industries.
- Be consistent with bold, italics, all caps and/or spacing.
- Do not use graphics, shadowing, clip art, or distracting bullets.
- Avoid generalities and focus on specifics about experience, projects, products, etc.
- The length of a resume varies according to field of interest, geographic location, and level of experience. Generally, an undergraduate with little or no professional experience will have a one-page resume. Experienced workers and some graduate students, along with students in certain disciplines, may have two pages. Check with a professor, industry professional, or the Career Center for help determining the appropriate length for your experience and desired career field.

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## **Step 3: Form an Initial Draft**

### **NAME & CONTACT INFORMATION (REQUIRED)**

- For your name, use a larger font size (16-18pt) and bold text.
- It is acceptable to write your preferred name on your resume since it is not a legal document. Some individuals do this by writing their first initial followed by their preferred name (e.g., J. Lee Thomas), and others by writing their preferred name in quotes (e.g., Jordan "Lee" Thomas). On all legal documents, such as those used for background checks, you should write your legal name.
- At minimum, contact information should include your phone number and e-mail.
- List the phone number where you can most easily be reached and ensure that your voicemail is set up with your name and an appropriate message.

- List only the email address you will use to correspond with the employer and ensure your email address name is appropriate for the job market.
- Including your full street address is optional. If desired, you could include just your city and state. If you plan to post your resume online (e.g., LinkedIn), you may want to omit your full street address for privacy.
- You may include a link to your LinkedIn profile or a personal website showcasing your work if complete and professional.

*Example:*

## **Colleen Davidson**

Lincoln, NE | (402) 555-5555 | email@nebrwesleyan.edu

### **EDUCATION (REQUIRED)**

This section can include your credit-based higher education degrees and certificates, as well as noncredit learning. Your information should include:

- Institution name, city, and state
- Degree (i.e., Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Arts)
- Major(s)
- Minors, concentrations, or areas of emphasis
- Month and year of graduation
- GPA (optional, often included if above 3.0)

*Example:*

Nebraska Wesleyan University (NWU) – Lincoln, NE  
 Bachelor of Science in Biology, Expected May 20XX  
 Minor: Mathematics  
 GPA: 3.82/4.0

Your most recent degree should be listed first. Typically, you will only list colleges or universities where you are currently enrolled or have earned a degree. If you wish to use the school's acronym on your resume, place it in parentheses after the full name of the institution (see above example).

Once you are past your first year in college, high school is not included on the resume unless you have a good reason you want an employer to know where you attended high school.

If applicable, you can include a statement about your contribution toward financing your education (e.g., "Financed 75% of college education through scholarships and employment"). Study abroad programs or academic honors and achievements may

also be included in this section. You might also list relevant coursework in or directly beneath the education section; just be sure to only list courses that are related to the profession or industry.

## **EXPERIENCE (REQUIRED)**

This part of your resume may include several sections. Experience does not always have to be paid work. Marketable skills are gained through community service, student organizations, athletics, etc. Some sample categories for your resume could include Student Teaching, Research Experience, Coaching Experience, Relevant Experience, Work Experience, Additional Experience, Leadership & Involvement, and Volunteer Experience, just to name a few.

For each experience, include the following information: name of the organization, your job title, dates of employment/involvement (months and years), and the location (city, state) of the organization. List experiences in reverse chronological order (most recent to least recent); do this for each experience section on your resume.

You should also have bulleted statements underneath your experiences that describe not just what you did at the organization, but instead should stress your accomplishments, higher-level responsibilities, and/or skills gained. Start each bulleted statement (not full sentences) with an action verb (see pages 10-11 for a list of action verbs).

*Example:*

### **Novartis** (Lincoln, NE)

*Human Resources Intern*, August 20XX – Present

- Compile new hire packets and retiree booklets
- Organize and verify Drug Enforcement Administration employee files, ensuring compliance with federal regulations
- Complete administrative tasks including filing, copying, and data entry of sensitive information
- Ensure personnel and medical files contain correct documentation per DEA and FDA guidelines
- Create binder tracking system for I-9 verification forms

It is important to know that even if you do not have direct experience with the tasks or type of work involved in a position, employers are looking for skills you have gained through former experiences that will transfer to their work environments. When incorporating transferable skills, look at the job description first, but also see the list below for ten common skills/competencies sought by employers. Choose a few and think through how you can demonstrate these skills within your resume.

- Critical/Analytical Thinking
- Creativity
- Embrace Diversity
- Time Management
- Self-Management
- Technology
- Communication
- Integrity
- Leadership
- Teamwork

Marketing your experience involves using strong action verbs, using keywords from the job description, and incorporating transferable skills. Below are a few examples of how bulleted statements can be enhanced by incorporating these suggestions.

**Weak:** Responsible for publicity.

**Better:** Interacted successfully with public affairs representatives and local media.

**Best:** Interacted successfully with public affairs representatives and local media, increasing community awareness of agency by 25%.

**Weak:** Duties included handling customer complaints.

**Better:** Resolved service and billing problems.

**Best:** Resolved service and billing problems, consistently recognized for promptness and professionalism.

**Weak:** Responsibilities included following safety rules and ensuring other lifeguards knew policies.

**Better:** Carried out safety precautions and instructed staff in the proper use of equipment.

**Best:** Carried out safety precautions and instructed staff in the proper use of equipment, resulting in a 50% reduction of injury accidents over the summer.

**Weak:** Worked in after-school athletic program.

**Better:** Explained team strategies and instructed youth on how to execute strategies.

**Best:** Explained team strategies and instructed youth on how to execute strategies, developing enthusiasm among team members which resulted in winning city competition.

Important tips to remember:

- Use present tense verbs when describing current positions and past tense when describing past experiences. Avoid starting your bullet points with verbs ending with “-ing” or “-s” (e.g., use “Organize” or “Organized,” not “Organizing” or “Organizes”).
- Avoid pronouns (I, he, she, my, me), and, unless necessary, small articles such as “a”, “an”, “the”.
- Target your resume by finding keywords from the job description and incorporating those words into your work experience.

- Quantify information when possible to show scope of responsibility or achievement. For example, “Trained six new student workers”, or “Increased sales by 25% over a three-month period”.

## HONORS/ACTIVITIES/LEADERSHIP (OPTIONAL)

Highlight what is most pertinent to your career goal and only include activities and honors you feel comfortable discussing. If you include information with a strong religious or political affiliation, for example, be mindful that some employers may have a bias reaction. If more detail is needed, use the guidelines and format you used for your “Experience” section(s). Include descriptions of the leadership roles you performed in these organizations.

*Example:*

**Theta Chi, Recruitment Chair** (September 20XX - Present)

- Increased chapter recruitment by 50% for two consecutive academic years.

**Blue Key Academic Honorary** (August 20XX - Present)

**NWU Pre-Health Club** (August 20XX - Present)

- Served on a team of five to recruit NWU alumni who are currently enrolled in pre-health professional programs to serve as panelists for a discussion on their experiences in pursuing their chosen careers.

**Red Cross Blood Drive, Volunteer** (January 20XX - December 20XX)

## SKILLS (OPTIONAL)

This section highlights measurable skills and abilities, such as technical skills, laboratory skills, and modern language proficiency or fluency. Items in this section should relate to the positions for which you are applying. The placement of this section on your resume may vary depending on the relevancy to the employer. Avoid including transferrable, non-measurable skills in this section (i.e., time management, communication skills, attention to detail). These are good skills to be thinking about, but when they are simply listed in your skills section, the employer has no context as to where you gained this skill or how you use it in a professional environment. Instead, transferrable skills should be incorporated into the bulleted statements in your “Experience” section(s).

*Example:*

### SKILLS

**Language:** French: *intermediate (speaking, reading), basic (writing);*

German: *fluent (speaking, reading, writing)*

**Computer:** Working knowledge of Microsoft Office Suite, Camtasia, HTML, SPSS, Adobe InDesign, Adobe Photoshop, and WordPress

## **REFERENCES (REQUIRED, BUT SEPARATE FROM THE RESUME!)**

The statement "References Available Upon Request" is not needed, as this is a given in the job search process. Reference names and information are generally listed on an entirely separate document (see References section in this handbook on page 16-17). Usually, references are requested either with the initial application package or at the end of the hiring process (at the end/after the interview, before extending a job offer).

**For examples of completed resumes, see pages 12-14.**

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## **Step 4: Proofread and Edit**

Make a solid impression by eliminating spelling errors, poor grammar, poor organization, smudges, wordiness, vagueness, etc. Any of these mistakes may give the impression that you are careless, sloppy, or unprofessional. Have several trusted people critique your resume.

- Contact the Career Center to have a career counselor critique your resume.
  - Ask your references to provide feedback.
  - Ask a family member, friend, or roommate to look over your resume.
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## **Step 5: Prepare Different Versions**

**Formatted Hard Copy:** When printing your resume, use good quality paper (at least 20% cotton bond): white, ivory, or a very pale gray. Avoid patterns that would give a "dirty" appearance when copied and ensure that you do not leave any stains or ink smudges on the paper. The Career Center provides resume paper upon request.

**Formatted Electronic Version:** Looks the same as your paper version when emailed or pasted into a company resume database. When uploading or emailing, always send as a PDF so formatting does not change. Always open the PDF on your own device before uploading or emailing to ensure the formatting looks good.

**Plain Text Version:** Stylized formatting is removed (i.e., bullets, bolding, italics, etc.) to be cut and pasted into online applications. Lines can be indented using the spacebar. To show section headers, use ALL CAPITAL LETTERS and think about rebuilding lists using a hyphen (-) or asterisk (\*) at the beginning of each line instead of bullets or other special characters. If horizontal lines are desired, create them by using a series of dashes. Email your resume to yourself to see how it looks.

**For advice on submitting your application materials, see pages 23-24.**

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# Special Considerations

## ACADEMIC RESUMES, OR CURRICULUM VITAE (CV)

An international CV and a United States CV are not the same. In the United States, a CV is a comprehensive document which summarizes one's educational and academic background. Rather than a specific focus on work history, categories highlight teaching and research experience, publications, presentations, professional affiliations, grants received, academic honors, and scholarly/professional memberships. CVs typically include more information, often extending to two or more pages. A CV should only be used if specifically requested. This might occur in the following instances:

- Applications for admission to graduate or professional programs
- Proposals for fellowships or grants
- Applications for positions in academia for teaching, research, or administration

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## EDUCATION RESUMES

If you are aspiring towards a position as a K-12 educator, incorporate a "Teaching Experience" category for your student teaching and education practicums. Instead of listing out every practicum, consider combining to summarize your observations. You may also have a "Certifications" section and possibly a "Professional Development" section if there are trainings that you'd like to feature. Even as a recent graduate, expect your resume to span 1-2 pages. When writing bulleted statements, highlight your achievements instead of routine responsibilities. Use the list below to consider and expand upon your own classroom successes:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| • Classroom management                            | • Collaboration with other staff           |
| • Curriculum development                          | • Parental involvement                     |
| • Cross-curriculum experience                     | • Organizing field trips/special projects  |
| • Cooperative learning                            | • Participation in the community           |
| • Diverse age groups, at-risk youth, ELL students | • Participation in after-school activities |
| • Unique teaching strategies/styles/methods       | • Use of technology                        |
| • Standardized testing                            | • Innovative techniques for engagement     |
| • Use of assessment tools                         | • Accommodations                           |
| • Participation in meetings                       | • Grading                                  |
|   | • IEP planning                             |

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## NURSING RESUMES

Nursing students are required to attain hands-on clinical experience. Help employers see the depth and breadth of your experiences by including (when applicable) preceptorships, relevant employment, clinical rotations, shadowing, and health care volunteer work. Clinical experience often varies greatly, so provide the employer with a clear understanding of what you know by using specific medical terminology for the

instruments, tests, or procedures you witnessed, performed, or assisted with. Your clinical experience should include your unit floor, organization, city and state, and dates. Remember all new BSN graduates have completed clinical rotations: find a way to make your rotational experience stand out. As mentioned before, don't just list job responsibilities in your bullet points. Show the results of your work and how it helped the organization.

If you have a long list of Clinical Rotations, you may need to be selective ("Select Clinical Rotations") and choose only relevant rotations per the position you are applying for.

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## **RESUMES FOR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES**

The Federal Government has a standard job application in which your resume serves as your application. The hiring agency uses the information in your resume to verify if you have the required qualifications stated in the job announcement. For this reason, you'll need to follow a very specific format which requires unique information. To ensure all these details are in place, it is suggested to use the Resume Builder on USAJOBS. The Resume Builder will guide you through the resume-writing process to ensure you do not leave out anything important.

# List of Action Verbs for Resumes

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## MANAGEMENT/LEADERSHIP SKILLS:

administered	contracted	enforced	increased	oversaw	scheduled
analyzed	controlled	enhanced	initiated	planned	streamlined
appointed	converted	established	inspected	presided	strengthened
approved	coordinated	executed	instituted	prioritized	supervised
assigned	decided	generated	managed	produced	terminated
attained	delegated	handled	merged	recommended	
authorized	developed	headed	motivated	reorganized	
chaired	directed	hosted	organized	replaced	
considered	eliminated	improved	originated	restored	
consolidated	emphasized	incorporated	overhauled	reviewed	

## COMMUNICATION/PEOPLE SKILLS:

addressed	conferred	discussed	interacted	observed	reinforced
advertised	consulted	drafted	interpreted	outlined	reported
arbitrated	contacted	edited	interviewed	participated	resolved
arranged	conveyed	elicited	involved	persuaded	responded
articulated	convinced	enlisted	judged	presented	solicited
authored	corresponded	explained	lectured	promoted	specified
clarified	debated	expressed	listened	proposed	suggested
collaborated	defined	formulated	marketed	publicized	summarized
communicated	described	furnished	mediated	reconciled	synthesized
composed	developed	incorporated	moderated	recruited	translated
condensed	directed	influenced	negotiated	referred	

## RESEARCH SKILLS:

analyzed	detected	explored	interpreted	organized	systematized
clarified	determined	extracted	interviewed	researched	tested
collected	diagnosed	formulated	invented	searched	
compared	evaluated	gathered	investigated	solved	
conducted	examined	identified	located	summarized	
critiqued	experimented	inspected	measured	surveyed	

## TECHNICAL SKILLS:

adapted	constructed	developed	overhauled	replaced	studied
assembled	converted	engineered	programmed	restored	upgraded
calculated	debugged	installed	regulated	solved	utilized
computed	designed	maintained	remodeled	specialized	
conserved	determined	operated	repaired	standardized	

### **TEACHING SKILLS:**

adapted	conducted	encouraged	guided	motivated	tested
advised	coordinated	evaluated	individualized	persuaded	trained
clarified	critiqued	explained	informed	simulated	transmitted
coached	developed	facilitated	instilled	stimulated	tutored
communicated	enabled	focused	instructed	taught	

### **FINANCIAL/DATA SKILLS:**

administered	assessed	conserved	forecasted	programmed	retrieved
adjusted	audited	corrected	managed	projected	
allocated	balanced	determined	marketed	reconciled	
analyzed	calculated	developed	measured	reduced	
appraised	computed	estimated	planned	researched	

### **CREATIVE SKILLS:**

acted	created	entertained	initiated	modified	revitalized
adapted	customized	established	instituted	originated	shaped
began	designed	fashioned	integrated	performed	solved
combined	developed	formulated	introduced	photographed	
conceptualized	directed	founded	invented	planned	
condensed	displayed	illustrated	modeled	revised	

### **HELPING SKILLS:**

adapted	assisted	cooperated	ensured	intervened	resolved
advocated	cared for	counseled	expedited	motivated	simplified
aided	clarified	demonstrated	facilitated	provided	supplied
answered	coached	diagnosed	familiarize	referred	supported
arranged	collaborated	educated	furthered	rehabilitated	volunteered
assessed	contributed	encouraged	guided	presented	

### **ORGANIZATION/DETAIL SKILLS:**

approved	collected	inspected	organized	reserved	updated
arranged	compiled	logged	prepared	responded	validated
cataloged	distributed	maintained	processed	reviewed	verified
categorized	executed	monitored	provided	scheduled	
charted	generated	obtained	purchased	submitted	
classified	implemented	operated	recorded	standardized	
coded	incorporated	ordered	registered	systematized	

### **MORE VERBS FOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

achieved	expanded	pioneered	restored	surpassed
completed	exceeded	reduced (losses)	spearheaded	transformed
earned	improved	resolved (issues)	succeeded	

# Resume Example 1: First-Year Student, Minimal Experience

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## Maura Rippe

Omaha, NE  
email@nebrwesleyan.edu  
XXX-XXX-XXXX

### EDUCATION

#### Nebraska Wesleyan University (NWU) | Lincoln, NE

Bachelor of Arts, Expected May 20XX

Major: Psychology

Minor: Family Studies

- Funded 70% of college tuition through academically awarded scholarships

#### Omaha Central High School | Omaha, NE

May 20XX

GPA: 3.78/4.0

### RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

#### Camp Fontanelle | Fremont, NE

*Camp Counselor* (June 20XX, June 20XX)

- Managed cabin of eight campers aged 11 to 12
- Presented at orientation and trained new incoming counselors
- Led small group meetings on peer pressure and conflict resolution
- Created information pamphlets and bulletin boards for students

### EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

#### Culver's | Omaha, NE

*Crew Member* (October 20XX - August 20XX)

- Recognized for outstanding work ethic by receiving Employee of the Month three times
- Trained seven new employees on register and making all frozen desserts
- Operated and reconciled cash register daily
- Organized and maintained inventory of food and beverage items weekly

### ACTIVITIES

- NWU Psychology Club (August 20XX - Present)
- Red Cross Blood Drive, *Volunteer* (April 20XX)
- Friendship Home, *Volunteer* (October 20XX)
- Omaha Central Homecoming Committee (May 20XX - October 20XX)

### SKILLS

- Proficient in Microsoft Word and PowerPoint
- Familiar with Microsoft Outlook email system on both Mac and PC operation systems

# Resume Example 2: Seeking an Internship

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## TY HOLDSON

Lincoln, NE 68504 | email@nebrwesleyan.edu | XXX-XXX-XXXX  
www.linkedin.com/ty\_holdson

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### EDUCATION

#### Nebraska Wesleyan University (NWU)

Bachelor of Science: Business Administration  
Minor: Finance

Lincoln, NE  
Anticipated: May 20XX  
GPA: 3.6/4.0

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### RELEVANT COURSEWORK

Business Communication  
Principles of Marketing  
Business & Economic Statistics

Principles of Management  
Accounting  
Personal Finance

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### WORK EXPERIENCE

#### Wells Fargo

Teller

Lincoln, NE  
May 20XX – Current

- Maintain appropriate cash limits, cash checks, establish deposits, and issue money advances
- Cash and confirm deposits, process loan expenses and open new accounts
- Balance cash drawer and manage petty cash account
- Keep a record of excess or less cash at the end of the shift
- Hired as junior teller; promoted because of accuracy, pace, and skills

#### NWU Weary Center

Open Recreation Staff

Lincoln, NE  
August 20XX – May 20XX

- Assisted individual students, faculty, and staff to create a safe workout environment
- Managed front desk check-in, greeting patrons and monitoring equipment check-out
- Oversaw cardio and weight rooms, recorded attendance, and supervised use of equipment
- Maintained a clean workout environment by routinely sanitizing machines and weights

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### EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

#### NWU New Student Orientation

May 20XX – Current

- Serve as an ambassador for first-year students by creating a welcoming and inclusive environment
- Exemplify leadership and communication skills by facilitating activities for a group of 16 students
- Volunteered at Lend A Hand to Lincoln, assisting the Foster Care Closet organization

#### NWU Men's Track & Field Team

August 20XX – Current

- Organize meetings to open and improve communication among team members
- Display strong time management skills by balancing full-time student workload and team responsibilities
- Provided leadership as a team captain for the 20XX outdoor season
- Received NCAA All-Conference Awards for outstanding performance (20XX, 20XX, 20XX)

# Resume Example 3: Seeking First Full-Time Position

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**Elise Ruppert**

(XXX) XXX-XXXX | email@gmail.com

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## EDUCATION

Nebraska Wesleyan University (NWU): Lincoln, NE

Bachelor of Arts: English, Communication Studies

Minor: Political Science

Anticipated: May 20XX

GPA: 3.97/4.0

- Honors: Sigma Tau Delta English Honor Society, Lambda Pi Eta Communication Honor Society
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## RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

**Communication Intern** – Solidago Conservancy: Lincoln, NE July 20XX–Present

- Interview stakeholders to illustrate the interconnected relationships of landowners and conservationists in local projects to relate to audience members and gain traction in the Midwest
- Create engaging Instagram and Facebook reels and LinkedIn posts that feature local prairie, wetland, and wilderness sites to educate the public on Solidago's mission
- Broadcast the addition of a 310-acre parcel to the conservation efforts through a celebratory fence-cutting and networking event

**Communication Intern** – Humanities Nebraska: Lincoln, NE May 20XX–Sept. 20XX

- Arranged weekly e-blasts showcasing humanities events in the state of Nebraska
- Led marketing efforts for the annual Nebraska Chautauqua by formulating a social media plan, designing event posters, and communicating with event partners
- Invented and executed engagement activities for over 20 Nebraska Chautauqua youth attendees such as an educational coloring book

**Digital Media, Marketing, & Podcast Intern** – SEACHange, LTD: Lincoln, NE Nov. 20XX–May 20XX

- Developed and expanded company podcast to reach audiences across all seven continents
  - Engaged professionally with potential partners through online interactions and in-person events
  - Oversaw all social media handles and witnessed 50% increase in engagement from Jan. 20XX to Dec. 20XX on the company's LinkedIn account
- 

## ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

**Writing Tutor** – NWU Cooper Center: Lincoln, NE Mar. 20XX–Present

- Cover drop-in hours and offer appointment times for students to ask questions about essay components, citation styles, and other writing-related inquiries
- Tutor and review an average of three student essays weekly
- Build rapport with students to create an environment that encourages student-centered collaboration and optimizes learning

**Intermediate Reading & Writing Teacher** – Lincoln Literacy: Lincoln, NE Aug. 20XX–Aug. 20XX

- Instructed and supported a small class of English Language Learners (ELL) once a week
  - Adapted to students' weekly needs to address immediate challenges like health insurance benefits
  - Formulated weekly lesson plans for a 90-minute class, building off skills learned in previous weeks
- 

## CAMPUS INVOLVEMENT & LEADERSHIP

- Global Service Learning Club (GSL) – *Secretary* Sept. 20XX–Present
- *Flintlock* Journal – *Public Relations Coordinator* Jan. 20XX–Present
- SustainNWU (Environmental Sustainability Group) Sept. 20XX–Present
- Student Affairs Senate (SAS) – *Academic Affairs Committee* Feb. 20XX–Dec. 20XX
- The Yip Student Newspaper – *Co-editor* Feb. 20XX–Nov. 20XX

# References

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Excellent references can win job offers. A less than enthusiastic reference can provide doubt and cost you the position. When providing references, always assume the people you select will be contacted to speak on your behalf.

Identify as many references as possible, considering current and former supervisors, professors, advisors, volunteer coordinators, and co-workers who have first-hand knowledge of your work performance. Be sure to find references who know you well enough to speak to your abilities and who will be able to give a positive report.

**Roommates, friends, and family members are not considered professional references.**

NEVER list someone as a reference without asking first! Call or meet individually with your top potential references. Begin by explaining that you are in a job search or applying to graduate/professional school. Then ask whether they would be willing to act as a positive reference for you. You might say something like:

*"Dr. Jackson, I will be graduating in May and will be seeking a full-time position. I realize how important references can be, and I would like to know if you would be comfortable serving as a positive reference?"*

Be prepared to provide a brief overview of your recent preparations and career plans. Give them a copy of your current resume and, if applicable, the description of the job you are applying for.

References should not be included on your resume. Instead, make a separate reference page. Be sure to include your name and contact information at the top formatted the exact same as your resume and cover letter to demonstrate they belong together and have professional in appearance. If printed, all three should be on the same high-quality bond paper.

Include each reference's name, current title, organization with which they are currently affiliated, address of their organization, preferred phone number(s), and email address. In some cases, you may also want to note your relationship to the individual (e.g., former supervisor at Walgreens), particularly if your reference has moved to a new organization. Typically, you will need to list three to four individuals.

Provide your reference list to a potential employer only when requested. Be sure to keep your references updated and thank your references after your job search.



# Reference Page Example

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## **MALIK DAVIS**

Lincoln, NE 68521  
(402) XXX-XXXX  
email@gmail.com

### **REFERENCES**

Reference #1 Name  
Job Title  
Organization Name  
Address  
City, State Zip code  
Phone number  
Email

Reference #2 Name  
Job Title  
Organization Name  
Address  
City, State Zip code  
Phone number  
Email

Reference #3 Name  
Job Title  
Organization Name  
Address  
City, State Zip code  
Phone number, Extension: 1234  
Email

Reference #4 Name  
Job Title  
Organization Name  
Address  
City, State Zip code  
Phone number, Extension: 5678  
Email

# Cover Letters

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A cover letter introduces your resume while demonstrating enthusiasm and knowledge for the position. The overall intention of the cover letter and resume is to motivate the reader to invite you for an interview. Unless you are handing over your resume in person (such as at a networking reception or career fair), a cover letter should ALWAYS accompany your resume. Without it, you are missing an opportunity to personally introduce yourself and explain your fit in the organization.

Spend time thinking through and composing a quality document. Know that an impressive cover letter can be more valuable than a resume when deciding which candidate to interview. The cover letter allows the reader to better understand who you are and serves as a sample of your writing style.

Generally, there are two types of cover letters:

1. The **letter of application** is used when responding directly to a job posting, mentioning the name of the position and how it came to your attention. It also specifies why you are the best fit for the position. This is considered the traditional cover letter. See page 22 of this handbook for an example of a cover letter.
2. A **letter of inquiry** is sent to an employer to “inquire” about the possibility of available positions or to ask for information about the organization. This type of letter can be used to inquire about job or internship possibilities, to request company information, or to request a meeting to discuss future opportunities within the organization. When writing letters of inquiry, include details about your qualifications that will prompt the employer to decide that a discussion with you will be worthwhile. See page 23 of this handbook for an example of a letter of inquiry.

Regardless of type, the key thing to remember about a cover letter is that it must be customized to the position and/or company to which you are applying. Sending out a generic letter to hundreds of employers is time consuming and rarely successful. It can create a perception that you are not a serious and thoughtful person, that you are desperate for a job, or that you don’t really care enough to learn about their organization.

Format your cover letter with single-spacing throughout the entire document. Place one blank space between each section. Everything should be left justified. Do not indent paragraphs.

To make a positive first impression, follow these additional tips:

- Address your letter to a specific person by name. If there is no contact listed on the job posting, call or email the company to ask to whom you should address your cover letter, how to address them (e.g., Ms., Mr., Mx., Dr.), and how to spell their first and last name (if calling). If you are unsure how to address the contact person, it is best to write their first and last name with no title in front.
- Keep your letter relevant, concise, and error-free.
- Do not rehash your resume, instead expand on a few unique qualifications that make you a fit for the position.
- Do not self-praise or mention skills or qualifications without providing examples from your experiences.
- Consider what you can do for the employer, not how this opportunity will benefit you.
- Use formal language to convey a professional and polished impression ("speak with you" instead of "talk to you").
- Show enthusiasm through your words, not exclamation points.
- Keep your letter on one page.
- Use active, rather than passive, verbs.
- Use "I" at a minimum. Whenever possible, avoid starting a sentence with "I."
- Avoid "weak phrases" or language such as "I think...", "I feel...", "I believe..."
- Remember to use key words from the job description to demonstrate you are a strong match for the position.
- Attract the reader's attention in the first sentence; avoid starting with the generic "I am writing to apply for..." unless it is standard for the industry.
- Do not use negative, qualifying statements ("Although I don't have ..., I do have..."). Emphasize what you DO bring!
- Include the name of someone recommending you, but only if you have permission.
- If printing a hard copy, don't forget to sign your name in black or blue pen.

# Outline for Writing a Cover Letter

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(Paste the exact same header as your resume, making sure to include your name and contact information.)

Month XX, 20XX (Write the date for when you submit the application)

Attn: Name of contact person, position title

Company or organization name

Street address

City, state and zip code

## **Salutation:**

Dear (Name):

- Never use "To Whom It May Concern" or "Dear Sir or Madam" as it gives the impression that your letter is generic and has not been tailored. Always strive to include the name of a contact person.
- If you are unable to obtain the contact's name, use "Dear (name of position) Hiring Manager" or similar for the salutation.
- Using a colon (:) rather than a comma after the name signifies this is a business letter.

## **First Paragraph:**

*Purpose: Grab the reader's attention and establish interest in the company.*

- Provide an opening sentence(s) that entices the reader to continue reading.
- Name the job for which you are applying and include how you learned of the position.
- (If applicable) Mention the name of the person who referred you to the organization and position, preferably a colleague of the contact person.
- Mention specific knowledge of the company to indicate your interest.

## **Middle Paragraph(s):**

*Purpose: Demonstrate your abilities relating to the position, and your potential value to the company, by highlighting your key strengths and experiences.*

- Don't just repeat the information from your resume. Instead, elaborate on/provide more detail regarding how you meet the job qualifications.
- State the specific skills/strengths/experiences you are prepared to bring to the company. These skills should address qualities needed to succeed in the position for which you are applying. Show that you know the employer's needs and that your skills are a match. Use the job description here, if applicable.

- Be sure to give examples of your skills and any related work experience (quantified results, accomplishments, and achievements). Explain how these skills will transfer to the position.

**Final Paragraph:**

*Purpose: Ensure follow-up action and extend your appreciation for being considered.*

- To follow up, you may choose to take an active approach by indicating that you will contact the employer (e.g., "I will call next week to discuss scheduling an interview."), or a passive approach (e.g., "I look forward to hearing from you after applications have been reviewed.").
- ALWAYS thank them for their time and consideration of your application.

**Signature:**

*Note: two spaces are often placed between the final paragraph and signature.*

Sincerely,

*(If submitting a hard copy application, sign your name in ink above typed name)*

Type your name

# Cover Letter Example

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## **Payton Matthies**

Elmwood, NE 68349  
402-XXX-XXXX  
email@nebrwesleyan.edu

January 3, 20XX

Attn: Seiler Library Internship Hiring Committee  
American Antiquarian Society  
185 Salisbury Street  
Worcester, MA 01609

Dear Seiler Library Internship Hiring Committee:

For as long as I can recall, I have loved organizing and been fascinated by history. My dream job since I was young has been to organize historical documents, and upon finding this internship program on Handshake, I thought, "This is exactly the summer program I have been looking for." An internship at the American Antiquarian Society working with and cataloguing historical materials would be the ideal opportunity for me to gain experience in the archival field and learn how I could apply my skills in organization, attention to detail, problem solving, written and verbal communication, and project management to a career in librarianship.

I became particularly interested in the field of archival work after studying art history in Paris last spring. While abroad, I sought out museums and libraries and was fascinated by the logistics of how materials were stored, curated, and displayed. "Sure, that's a Picasso, but why is it on this wall and not that one over there?" This realization motivated me to focus my post-graduation plans on exploring opportunities in archival work, and I am eager to learn from American Antiquarian Society Members this summer to improve my training in the industry.

As a driven and self-motivated individual, I enjoy working independently on detail-oriented projects such as research, scheduling, and organizing. My background in theatre has afforded me experience and passion for managing projects across artistic departments, as well as creating and enforcing structural frameworks for organizing and distributing a substantial amount of show paperwork. My educational training as a theatrical technician has been enjoyable, though I have been most excited for and fulfilled by the aspects of my roles which include accumulating, organizing, and making available documents and knowledge for the creative team. I am looking forward to focusing more on my organizational skills and transitioning into the world of libraries and archives after my graduation in May, and in a few years, I plan to pursue a Master of Library and Informational Science degree so I can work in archival and library science.

Thank you for considering my candidacy for the Seiler Library Internship. I look forward to hearing more about the position once applications are reviewed.

Sincerely,

Payton Matthies

# Letter of Inquiry Example

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## **BLAIR JOBBIN**

402-XXX-XXXX | email@nebrwesleyan.edu

February 15, 20XX

Attn: Darrin Klaus, Executive Director  
Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parent Association  
3601 N. 25th St., Suite D  
Lincoln, NE 68521

Dear Mr. Klaus:

On the Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parent Association website, I read that over 6,000 children are in foster care, sometimes for several years, seeking permanent homes. Upon learning this statistic, I felt compelled to reach out in hopes of supporting the mission of your organization. As a senior social work major at Nebraska Wesleyan University, I am confident that I can contribute my skills and experience in a beneficial and meaningful way.

My academic and student learning experiences have prepared me well for supporting children and families. My curriculum thus far has included courses in the areas of Child Psychology, Loss, Grief & Death, Developmental Psychology and Clinical Psychology. In addition to my coursework, I also completed a service-learning project at Kahoa Elementary School in Lincoln, Nebraska. During this time, I assisted in the coordination of a "Parents as Teachers" program which provided education to parents on how to be involved in their child's learning. My main function was to ensure the event ran smoothly, but I also learned about several local community resources for parents and families.

Enclosed please find a copy of my resume for your consideration. I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to talk to you about any internship possibilities at the Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parent Association. I will call you at the end of next week to follow up. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

(hand-written signature)  
Blair Jobbin

# Submitting Application Materials

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Thought should be given to how you submit your application materials. Cover letters and resumes are typically emailed to a designated hiring manager or submitted online in an application portal. The general rule is to do what the employer instructs by checking the organization website, the job description, or calling the organization to ask. Below are answers to common questions about submitting your job application materials.

## **What should I keep in mind when emailing my materials?**

Review the application instructions to see exactly how they would like you to submit your documents. Are they supposed to be attachments or pasted into the body of the email? Should the application materials be combined into a single document, or attached as individual documents? Do they specify what type of documents to send (e.g., Word doc or PDF)?

If nothing is specified, attach your cover letter and resume to the email as individual documents using a PDF format to avoid layout changes.

Name your documents like this:

Last Name.First Name.Cover Letter

Last Name.First Name.Resume

If asked to upload all application materials as a single PDF, the order of your documents goes: cover letter, resume, references.

Keep your email brief if you are attaching your cover letter. Include a greeting, introduce yourself, and state that your resume and cover letter are attached. Remember to include a closing (e.g., Sincerely), followed by your name. Contact the organization you are applying to if you have specific questions.

Make sure you use an appropriate subject line. Review the position's application instructions to see if they tell you what to put. If they don't specify, use a simple and appropriate phrase like "Experienced History Grad for Exhibitions Manager Position."

Keep in mind that employers are busy. They often receive a large volume of resumes, and they will not look at email that looks like spam. Applicants who don't follow instructions are often viewed as not good job candidates and therefore screen themselves out of consideration.



As always, spell check and proofread everything. Ensure that all application materials are attached. Email a test version to yourself before sending the final email to check that the text of your email looks normal and that all attachments open.

### **When do I need to have hard copies?**

Carry hard copies of your resume only when attending a career fair. You can expect employers will require you to officially apply to job opportunities online or via email; however, carrying hard copies can help facilitate conversation.

Additionally, it's a good idea to show up with hard copies when you are scheduled for an interview. Even though someone has already seen and screened your resume, you might have updated, revised, or improved your resume since you applied. You can offer these to individuals who you meet during the interview process.

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## **The NWU Career Center is here to help!**

To receive feedback on completed drafts of your application materials or get help brainstorming ideas to get started, schedule an appointment with the Career Center by [logging into Handshake](#) using your NWU e-mail credentials. Once logged in, click on "Career Center" (top left corner) then on "Appointments" to get scheduled.

Additionally, there are **downloadable resume outlines** available in the Resources section of the Career Center page to help you get started on crafting a well-formatted document.

You may also stop by the Career Center (lower level, Story Student Center), call us at (402) 465-2224, or email [career@nebrwesleyan.edu](mailto:career@nebrwesleyan.edu) to schedule an appointment. We also hold Drop-in Hours for resume and cover letter critiques on a first-come, first-served basis on Tuesdays from 1:00 – 3:00 p.m., Wednesdays from 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., and Thursdays from 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.